

JOURNEY OF NO RETURN

chilling account of how these men lured a taxi driver on a trip and killed him in cold blood

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When on November 28, 2020, Ajayi Olanrewaju, a taxi driver from Ikole-Ekiti, Ekiti State but based and eking out his daily living in Yenagoa, Baysa State embarked on a chartered trip to Rivers State, in his Sienna car, No. LSR 593 GK, he had no inkling that he was embarking on journey of no return. The suspects, now in police custody, agreed to pay him N20, 000 for the trip.

But if Olanrewaju whose corpse is now lying stone dead in a mortuary waiting for the completion of police autopsy had had any premonition that he would not come back alive from the ill-fated journey, there is no doubt that he wouldn't have agreed to take the journey even if the suspects agreed to pay him N20 million. But by the time he realized that it was already too late for either himself or anybody else,

including his wife, Bose, to do something to prevent the fate that later befell him. Talk about man's inhumanity to man!

Ill-fated journey to death

His journey to the world beyond initially disguised as journey to Rivers State began for this man who was hale and hearty, on that day, when Sunday Imoh, 21, from Mkpato Enin Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State but living in Yenagoa contacted him for the charter trip. Imoh who attended Bonny Primary School and Industrial Unity Technical School, Bonny, Rivers State before dropping out in Year 3 to become a welder is no stranger to Olanrewaju nor to his wife, Bose. This is because that is not the first time he had contacted the taxi driver on such business deal. But as things turned out later, he had other evil plan in mind other than arranging for a chartered trip in which he himself was one of the passengers. Other suspects include: Michael Clifford and Opena Akpabio, 20, respectively, and Ondogba Ebi, 22. But both Clifford and Ebi hail from Sagbama Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. The story of how they eventually stabbed and strangled Olanrewaju to death and seized his car and sold it to a buyer is one that will continue to be told long after the remains of the poor, trusting taxi driver has been committed to mother earth and the suspects handed down their just judgment. But right now investigation into the murder case is on by the Homicide Section, State Criminal Investigation Department of Bayelsa State Police Command.

Speaking on how the callous plan was hatched and executed by the four heartless Satanic men, the Bayelsa State Commissioner of Police, Mr. Mike Okoli told Saturday Sun that on that day, November 28, 2020, the four suspects chartered Olanrewaju to take them to Rivers State.

But on their way somewhere around Okogbe Village, in Ahoada East Local Government Area of Rivers State, they stopped the driver, dragged him out of the car, stabbed him several times and strangled him afterwards after he has been weakened by the knife wounds. They thereafter dumped his body in the bush and sped away with his car. So far, so good they must have thought.

Murder will out, says an English proverb. They would have been gotten away with the murder though but for one oversight. Olanrewaju's phone, it was reported, was bad and not working even on the day they embarked on the deadly trip. To make up for it and to keep in touch with Imoh, he had used a friend's phone. When the police detectives waded into the matter after Olanrewaju's wife reported not seeing her husband for three days, it was those calls that he made that day that they used in tracing Imoh's movements and whereabouts and to track him down. And, that was how what the suspects thought was a foolproof plan began to unravel.

How the evil deed was exposed – Deceased's wife

CP Okoli explained that after three days, when the deceased's wife, did not see him, she reported at Afenta Police Station in Yenagoa that her husband was missing. He said later the case was transferred to the State Criminal Investigation Department. Through technical information analysis based on call logs, the Homicide detectives, led by Emilia Mani (Superintendent of Police) and a team of detectives assigned the case were able to arrest the four suspects between December 28, and 30, 2020 at Agudama-Epic

Yenagoa. They were also able to arrest John Joseph Cletus who bought the Sienna car in the sum of N450,000 in Akwa Ibom State.

On January 6, 2021, the prime suspect, Imoh, took the Homicide detectives to the point in the bush where they dumped the body of the driver, which had begun to decompose at Okogbe Village. On January 20, 2021, the police detectives and forensic experts carried out their first autopsy.

Speaking with Saturday Sun, the thoroughly traumatised wife of Olanrewaju, explained how she became a widow overnight without any premonition whatsoever. “My late husband was a transporter, and it was on November 28, 2020 that one of the suspects introduced himself as a naval officer. He said he wanted my husband to carry him from Bayelsa State to Rivers State, I called my husband later but discovered that his phone was switched off. Three days later, I went to Afenta Police Station to report that my husband was missing. My lawyer wrote a petition to the Bayelsa State Commissioner of Police, calling for proper investigation of my late husband’s whereabouts. Following the petition, the case was transferred to the State Criminal Investigation Department, Yenagoa.’

On how the suspects were trailed and eventually nabbed, she reports that her husband’s phone had some fault. “But on that fateful day, he used one of his friends’ phone number to call one of the suspects, Sunday Imoh. It was his friend’s phone line which he used to call him that led police detectives to arrest him on December 29, 2020. Upon his arrest, he confessed to the murder crime. So, I want justice to be done on this matter. This has brought me real agony. Who will take care of my children?”

Suspects speak, admit culpability

The prime suspect, Imoh admitted culpability in a chat with Saturday Sun. “I was the one who initiated the murder of the late driver,” he said with some sobriety. “I introduced the deal to my other gang members. I invited them to a house in Agudama Epic. Why we killed the driver was because we needed money to celebrate Christmas and the New Year and we know if we sell his car we would get the money. I know the late driver, at Tombia around Amassoma Park, Yenagoa. Before this case, I had always assisted people to charter his car.

“We planned the deal. I bought and brought the rope which we used to strangle him. We chartered his Sienna car and we planned to give him N20, 000. At about 5:15am on that day, we were at Okogbe Village when I told the driver to stop so that I could urinate. But we planned that immediately I came down from the vehicle, two of my gang members, Michael and Ondogba would use the rope to tie on his neck and strangle him. They did so and he died. We dumped his body in the bush and left. We took his car and drove it to Akwa Ibom and sold it to Mr. John Joseph Cletus in the sum of N450, 000 and shared the money. But not too long after this, I was arrested in my house at Agudama Epic Yenagoa, on December 29, 2020.”

Ebi who attended Ojojo Primary School and Bright Success Secondary School, Warri before becoming an event planner and interior decorator admitted participating in the cold-blooded murder, an action which he now says he regrets. “I know Sunday. He was the one who brought the deal,” he said. “My role was to use the rope to strangle him. I also used a knife to stab him several times. It was Sunday who ordered me to stab him. He told me that we need to kill the driver because he knows him. I followed them to Akwa

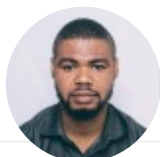
Ibom to sell the Sienna car. I was given N70, 000. I was arrested on December 31, 2020.”

Clifford also confessed to participating in the murder. “It was Sunday who gave me a knife to take to the scene,” he said. “I held the driver and put a rope tightly around his neck while Ondogba continued to stab him. I followed them to Akwa Ibom to sell the car. I was given N70, 000 as my share. I was arrested in Yenagoa on December 29, 2020.”

Akpabio, an electrician also admitted to not only participating in the murder proper but to also partaking in the sale of the car. “I was given N70, 000 as my own share But on December 28, I was arrested at Yenagoa.” Neither was John Joseph Cletus who bought the Sienna car and paid them an sum of N400,000, spared in the security sweep. “I told them I would give them the balance of N50, 000 when they bring the original documents of the car,” he explained. “They gave me a photocopy. It was on December 29, 2020 that the police detectives arrested me in Akwa Ibom. I have handed the Sienna over to police detectives,”

Police stance on the case

Commenting on the state of things so far, CP Okoli said that the four suspects will be charged to court as soon as investigation into the murder is concluded. He also promised that the command will soon release the corpse of the deceased driver to his family for burial after the completion of the autopsy.



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